

# The Haiku Parrots

## HABITAT AND GENERAL BEHAVIOR PATTERNS

The birds were observed to began their day at or close to sunrise by noisily flying from their roost, which for the Huelo flock appeared to be the sea cliff at Huelo Point (Lat. 20 55' 00" N; Long. 156 13' 10" W) on property owned by Benedict Joseph P. Tavares et al. (Zone 2, Sec. 9, Plat 7, Parcel 52). During the course of this study, the parrots then usually flew at tree-top height southward over "The Founder's" property -- sometimes landing in the tall trees (e.g., eucalyptus) of that property for up to an hour before moving to other sites to feed, preen, and socialize. When people have spotted the birds at Kailua or in Waipio and Hoolawa Valleys, it is typically before 0900 or in the mid- to late afternoon.

A rather high-pitched call ["schrack"] was repeated frequently when these birds were in flight or about to do so. Their sounds were loud and raucous. When perched, the birds were relatively quiet; however, periodically some begin to vocalize and suddenly a portion of the flock would circle the area noisily before again landing. They are gregarious within their own species but are not very social or interactive with humans ("The Founder," pers. comm.).

The Huelo flock was observed to be made up of subgroups of primarily pairs or triplets. Thus, when in flight, the flock organization was not uniformly symmetrical as seen in geese but rather a random clustering of pairs or triplets merged with or near similar units. It was not unusual for only a portion of the population to fly as a flock; therefore, on some occasions observers see, for example, 12, 15, 18, or 23 in a flock and later may see a group of 2 or 4.

Mitred Conures are frugivorous/granivorous. Locally they feed on the fruits and seeds of wild plum, Christmas berry, papaya, strawberry guava, and other shrubs and trees (Kahiamoe, pers. comm.; Parker, pers. comm.). They are opportunists and feed on whatever is accessible and ripe at the time. Thus they roam in search of food and may return to the same site on subsequent days when the supply is adequate for the flock.

Later in the day the birds return to Huelo, often noisily circling the area and perching in tall trees, before eventually settling at the roost by sunset. A couple of years ago, the Division of Forestry and Wildlife attempted to capture the flock while they were perched but had no success. Ueoka (pers. comm.) said landowners did not allow the State biologists access to the roost site.

To date, there is no evidence the population has fragmented or is using more than one geographical area. Nevertheless, I and other observers have noted the existing population does not always fly as a single flock; sometimes one or two dozen will be together and later pairs or groups of four will fly together. Permanent fragmentation would be anticipated as the population increases in size, e.g., exceeding the roost site or forage capacity of the area. The site where nesting occurs was not determined during this study. Perhaps some, if not all, nesting occurs at the sea cliff; "The Founder's" aviary is another possibility.